

COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL PAMPHLET.

LONDON, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1817.

[930]

TO
LORD VISCOUNT FOLKESTONE,

On the questions, whether a Reform of the Parliament would tend to injure and degrade the Nobility, or whether it would tend to produce the contrary effect.

North Hampstead, Long Island,
22d Aug. 1817.

MY LORD,

It is very natural, that those, who, no matter from what causes, are placed in a situation above the mass of mankind, should be very backward to listen to any proposition, the tendency of which is to bring them down nearer to the common level; and, as I am well convinced, that the fear of such a consequence has had great weight with many disinterested men amongst the nobility in England, and, in fact, made them enemies of a Reform of the Parliament, it appears to me to be useful to shew, that this fear is groundless, and that a Reform is not less necessary to prevent injury and degradation to the order to which your Lordship belongs, than it is to secure to the People any chance of liberty and happiness. In the discussion of this subject I address myself to your Lordship, because of all the Noblemen in England I have observed not one, whose conduct has been more strongly marked with integrity and sound sense; because I know your Lordship to be sincere in all your professions; because I have

always seen you acting beyond your promises; because, if you differ from us upon the great question of Reform, you have proved, that you abhor the mode of answering us which has been adopted; and, finally, because, I have, for many years, had, and still have a greater respect and regard for your Lordship than for almost any other man that I know in the world.

When, a few Numbers back, I was endeavouring to do justice to the Magistrates of Berkshire, who had interposed in behalf of the STATE PRISONERS in the jail of Reading, I was not aware, that your Lordship was one of those Magistrates; and it is with great pleasure, though not with surprise, that I now perceive that such was the fact. It is with still greater pleasure, that I see you standing forward to obtain a list of the names, places of arrest, and places of imprisonment of those victims of conscious oppression; and, my satisfaction on this score is greatly heightened by the reflection, that, long before, I received an account of this motion on the part of your Lordship, I had sent off for publication in England that Register, in which I had laid down a plan for obtaining possession of all the names and other circumstances sought to be obtained by the motion of your Lordship. This coincidence is extremely gratifying to me; but, I hope, that my mode of

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obtaining the desired facts will be adopted by *you*, who have it completely in your power to give effect to every part of the plan. That which I have said, that *I would do if I were a Member of Parliament*, you have the power to do, and that, too, not only without any risk, but consistently with your duty, especially after the *refusal* of the Ministers to inform the Parliament of the *names of the victims*.

You are satisfied, my Lord, of the injustice of these proceedings; that you have explicitly and manfully declared; but, this is not all that is required. It is not enough to cry out against the *injustice* without a great effort to obtain *justice*. *Impunity* is what the Ministers are endeavouring to provide for; but, if these deeds be suffered to go unpunished, and the victims to go without compensation, to what purpose do we complain? A notification in your name would bring you from the relations and the friends of the Victims all the facts which you sought to obtain from the Oppressors. How little trouble, how trifling an expence, it would cause to come at all these facts, and to cause them to be put upon record! How much greater and more durable the effect, that would be produced in this way, than in any other way that can be imagined! And, what apology has any Member of Parliament, who disapproves of the despotic acts, to offer for the neglect of such a duty? Shall he plead his having attempted to do that which he knew he could *not effect*; shall he plead this in excuse for not having attempted to do that which he knew he *could effect*?

I am not aware of any manner in which a Summer could be spent more honourably, more happily, or more advantageously to the country, than in visiting and relieving the wives, children and parents of the Victims of tyranny. "I was sick and in prison and you visited me not", is to be one of the charges against those who are to be hurled into everlasting fire. And, when Jesus Christ spoke of persons *in prison*, he certainly did not mean thieves and murderers, but persons put into prison *unjustly*; innocent sufferers; men who would have been acquitted if brought to a fair trial. Your Lordship *would* have visited the Victims in Reading Jail, but, though unable to do that, you may visit their wives, children and parents; and you have it fully in your power to make and put up in the Journals in Parliament a record of all the circumstances of every case. It has been the uniform characteristic of your Lordships' undertakings of public nature, that they have not only exhibited great ability, but that they have produced *great effect*. And it has been owing to the *perseverance* with which you have conducted them. Only undertake the task which I propose, and you will do more good than you have ever before been able to do.

Are you afraid of the charge of *singularity*? Are you afraid of the charge of *thrusting yourself forward*? What soldier or sailor was ever afraid of such a charge? Why, my Lord, HAMPDEN was the only man who stood forward upon that memorable occasion. He was not *afraid* of being singular. Look over the names of the illustrious friends of freedom

England, and you will find, that, if the owners of those names had been afraid of the charge of *thrusting themselves forward*, they would, long ago, have been as completely forgotten as are the common-place petty tyrants of their day. Indeed, what is *fame* but *singularity* in the performance of great acts? It is in times like these that men must distinguish themselves, or never. To live along with the possession of a great estate, and to die without any act whereby to be remembered, is not to surpass very far in the scale of creation one of farmer Gearing's big cows, which you daily see feeding with so much ease and pleasure in the rich pastures of Coleshill.

But, my Lord, let me not act the part of the deceiver. Truth forbids me to address your Lordship as if I supposed, that the performance of the task I have here spoken of, even if the manner of that performance were fully equal to that of any thing you have ever undertaken, would be, in the end, attended with good to the country, unless you were to become an advocate for that cause, in which these Victims are suffering. That cause is, the *Cause of Reform*. The struggle for this object has been going on for many years. It has, at last, led to this result; that its enemies, defeated by argument, operating upon the minds of an enlightened and suffering people, have resorted to open despotic force. As long as that force can be maintained, those enemies will prevail; but, *not one moment longer*. The thing has now gone *too far* ever to be recalled. The people are really and truly enlighten-

ed as far as relates to their *rights* and to the cause of their manifold sufferings. This knowledge, which is of vast importance, is never to be rooted out of their minds. They were peaceable and patient in the praying for their rights; but, it was clear enough, that, in the end, if their repeated supplications had failed, or, if they could not have been answered by *reasoning*, blows *must have followed*. There was *no answer* for them. *Abuse* was all the answer. It was, therefore, manifest, that, in the end, Reform or Blows must have been the consequence; and, I am, at all times, ready to allow, that the choice of the Parliament lay between *Reform* and *Despotism*. Despotism of a mixed kind at first, and, in the end, sheer *Military Despotism*. Of course, I think it, as I have always thought it, inconsistent to complain of the Acts which have been passed, and, at the same time, to oppose a Reform of the Parliament.

You, my Lord, are amongst those who oppose this Reform; and, though I do not impute any selfish motive to you as your ruling principle, it is natural that a part, at least, of your feeling in this case should consist of a fear, that, in the change, which the Reformers contemplate, would be included the injuring and degrading of the order, to which you belong. It is with the hope of convincing you that this is an error, that I have now done myself the honour to address myself to you; and, if the arguments which I submit to you upon this important subject should appear inconclusive, I am sure you will attribute the use of them to a sincere wish to restore the

liberties and the happiness and to see preserved the power and renown of our country.

In all questions of mere right and wrong, it is sufficient to prove the existence of the one or the other. Our right to a *Reform*, upon the principle of annual parliaments and voting co-extensive with taxation, direct or indirect, has been *proved*. The *proof* remains undenied. The Writings of Major Cartwright, those of Samuel Johnstone (not the bigotted, superstitious, pensioned Samuel Johnson), those of the venerable Mr. Baron Maseres, those of Mr. Fawkes, the Letter and Bill of the late Duke of Richmond. In these writings, to go no further, are the *proofs* of our *right*. But, I am now to argue the matter as a question of *expediency* as the proposed Reform may affect *the Nobility* of the Kingdom.

In discussing whether a *change* of any sort be expedient or not, we must first consider, whether the party, who thinks he shall be injured by it, *can, by any means remain in his present state*; for, if he cannot, he *must* submit to *some change or other*. Now, let me put it to your Lordship: do you believe, that the present state of things *can continue for any length of time*? Have you made up your mind to see England a Dungeon-Country for the rest of your life, and to leave your share of it such to your son? No: I know, that you could not endure the thought. A change, then, you must desire to see. And, what sort of change can this be? Do you imagine, that the Dungeon-System can cease, and, without any Reform, *all can go on as before*? What! with a press,

such as produced the Dungeon-System, and with all the Dungeon transactions fresh in our memories! What do you think would be the effect of the "Two-Penny Trash Publications," in which the hawk-eyed Crown Lawyers, with all their spaniels, terriers and ferrets, could find nothing to prosecute? What do you think would be the effect of these with all the Dungeon-Work to comment on? Unless, indeed, exile and the dungeon should have convinced the authors of the just and mild disposition of the government, and have made them the admirers of the Borough System. How then, unless this wonderful effect should be produced, is the thing to return to its former state? I say nothing about the progressive effects of the Paper-money system. I am only calculating upon what would arrive independent of those effects. And, again I ask your Lordship, whether you think, that, if the Dungeon and Gagging system were done away, and no Reform were adopted, the government could go peaceably on for a year? I am fully persuaded that it could not, and, therefore, it appears to me, that the Dungeon and Gagging System can never cease, except in consequence of a Reform, or of a Convulsion.

If I am right in this opinion, and if the change must take place, at no distant day, the only choice for the Nobles lies between perpetual *Military despotism* and *Reform*. I have no doubt that some of them would have no objection to the former. Indeed, they have proved that they would not; but, as this is not the case, I am well assured, with regard

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to your Lordship, and, as *time* may prevent even Reform from healing the deep wounds of the country, I shall now endeavour to show, that a Reform would not injure or degrade the Nobility; but, on the contrary, that it would insure their safety and relieve them from the odium, under which they now exist in the eyes of the people.

Let us suppose for a moment a House of Commons, who should be really and truly chosen by *the People*. Why is it to be imagined, that they would wish to overturn the Nobility? Those who suppose that, always proceed upon the notion, that the People, if left to themselves, would choose low and poor and ignorant and even worthless men, and men of no other description. But, is this notion founded in reason? Is it founded in any thing which we find in the natural disposition of man? Was it ever yet seen, that man sought to elevate their *equals*, and to place them above their own heads? Too much the contrary is witnessed in the world; and, we often see envy step in and give to a superior in rank and fortune that which had been more wisely given to an equal in point of rank and fortune. Look at the choice of Societies, Clubs, Fraternities of every sort; and you will find, that it invariably alights upon the persons of the highest rank or talent or consequence. As naturally as the sparks fly upwards, the mass of any people will prefer superiors to equals in all cases where trust is to be reposed and where their choice is free. In the country, from which I am now writing, where the whole of the people vote for the Pre-

sident and both Houses of Congress, do they choose poor, illiterate, and worthless men? The contrary is the well-known fact. Men the most distinguished for property as well as for talent and integrity are chosen. In the City of Westminster, broke loose from the trammels of the aristocracy, have the people chosen poor, illiterate, and worthless men? Nay, even the *Spenceans*, whose wild notions about equality one would have expected to find to shut out the rich as completely as the camel is shut out of the eye of a needle. Even these leaders in the cause of "*Christian Policy*," who call all the land the "*People's Farm*," have upon the list of their Committee of Public Safety, a Lord, a Baronet, Mr. Fawkes, Major Cartwright, Mr. Hunt, and only two of themselves, the one a *Gentleman* and the other a *Surgeon*.

Both reason and experience, then, forbid us to believe, that the People, if they had their free choice, would choose, in many cases, poor, illiterate and worthless men. They would, of course, select from amongst the men of fortune and talent those gentlemen who appeared to them to be the most decided in the cause of public liberty, and who had never pocketed any of the public money; but still, generally speaking, they would choose *gentlemen*, and would, to a certainty, reject public robbers of every description. And, my Lord, in what way would the dignity of Parliament, or of the Crown, suffer from the putting of Sir John THROGMORTON in the place of a son of an army Commissary? In what way would it suffer from the putting of Mr. HALLETT in the place of Mr.

NEVILLE? But, the late DUKE OF RICHMOND has answered this objection long ago. I beg permission to refer your Lordship to his famous Letter, which was first published in 1783, and which was re-published by me in the Register of the first of March last. It is worthy of notice that the Duke wrote that letter in answer to one which he had received from the Committee of Correspondence appointed by the DELEGATES of forty-five *Volunteer Corps*, assembled at Lisborne in Ireland; and that his letter was intended to be *laid before a Provincial Assembly of DELEGATES which was to be held at Dungannon*. Thus, then, it was not deemed to be *treasonable* to meet as *Delegates* upon the subject of Parliamentary Reform in those days; and it is also worthy of remark, that Lord Castlereagh was one of those Irish Delegates, either at this particular time, or at a period subsequent to it. And, does your Lordship think that we are so base as not to feel resentment at the measures which have lately been adopted, principally upon the ground that *Delegates* had met in various parts of the country?

The Noble Duke, after calling the Borough-influence a *Hydra of Corruption*; after observing that a Reform of the House of Commons *would include every other advantage which a nation could wish*; after observing that *the people had been so often deceived that they would now trust scarcely any set of men*; after observing that *it was from the people at large that he expected any good*; after contending that *the people had an undisputed right to Universal Representation and An-*

nual Parliaments; after these and other assertions and statements, the Noble Duke proceeds to answer the objections which have been offered to his Plan of Reform. I beseech your Lordship to read the whole of the letter; but the following passage I cannot help quoting upon this occasion. "It is feared by me," says the Duke, "that the influence of power and riches will give to the *aristocracy* so great a *lead* in these elections, as to place the whole government in their hands. Others, again, dread, that when Paupers and the lowest orders of the People shall have an equal vote with the first Commoner in the Kingdom, we shall fall into all the confusion of a Democratic Republic. The contrariety of these two apprehensions, might of itself be a sufficient proof that neither extreme will take place. It is true, that the poorest man in the kingdom will have an equal vote with the first, for the choice of the person to whom he trusts *his all*; and I think he *ought* to have that equal degree of security against oppression. It is also true, that men of superior fortunes will have a superior degree of weight and influence; and, I think, that as education and knowledge generally attend property, those who possess them ought to have weight and influence with the more ignorant. But the essential difference will be, that the people may be *led*, but cannot be *driven*. Property will have its weight, as it ever must have, in all governments; and I conceive, that in this plan it will precisely find its just proportion *combined with talents and character*. A

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"man of *great property*, who is be-
 "loved and esteemed, will, as he ought,
 "have great sway; but, tyranny and
 "oppression, though attended with
 "riches, may be resisted, and will no
 "longer be attended with a Burgage
 "Tenure at command. Another ob-
 "ject of apprehension is, that the
 "principle of allowing to every man
 "an equal right to vote tends to
 "*equality* in other respects, and to
 "*level property*. To me it seems to
 "have a direct contrary tendency.
 "The equal rights of men to security
 "from oppression, and to the enjoy-
 "ment of life and liberty, strike me
 "as perfectly compatible with their
 "unequal shares of industry, labour,
 "and genius, which are the origin of
 "inequality of fortunes. The equality
 "and inequality of men are both
 "founded in nature; and whilst we
 "do not confound the two, and only
 "support her establishments, we can-
 "not err. The protection of proper-
 "ty appears to me one of the most
 "essential ends of society; and so far
 "from injuring it from this plan, I con-
 "ceive it to be the *only* means of *pre-*
 "*serving property*; for the present
 "system is hastening with *great*
 "*strides to a perfect equality in uni-*
 "*versal poverty.*"

Can you, my Lord, read these
 words without feeling great respect
 for the opinions of the writer, who,
 more than thirty years ago, saw so
 clearly the evils that were to befall his
 country! How sound was his judg-
 ment, and how correct were his views!
 As I once before observed, of all the
 Noblemen in England the Duke of
 Richmond was most distinguished for

his knowledge as to the character of
 the people, and also for his industry
 and zeal in promoting their welfare.
 He was no Bible-Society or Religious
 Tract Gentleman. His mind was too
 enlightened to think of preserving the
 national character for bravery and
 frankness by making the people fana-
 tics. As far as religion was con-
 cerned he suffered them to walk peace-
 ably in the paths of their fore-fathers;
 and, while, as a Lord Lieutenant and
 a Magistrate he duly administered the
 Law, as a master he was not only bene-
 volent to the people, but he was active
 in teaching them, both by precept and
 example, improvements in Agriculture
 and in all moral concerns. He gave
 work to every man who was in want
 of work, come from where he would.
 He saw every man labour himself; and
 while he was mild in the whole of his
 deportment towards the people, he
 discriminated between the idle and the
 industrious with the most scrupulous
 regard to impartiality and justice. On
 the other hand, proceeding upon the
 wise maxim that labour ought to be
 sweetened by recreation, amongst all
 ranks of men, he was a pattern with
 regard to the sports of the field; and
 his Park was the scene of all those
 manly sports and exercises, in which
 the people of England so much delight,
 and which distinguish them from all
 other nations in the world. When he
 died, as I once before observed, *his*
neighbourhood died with him; and, a
 Sussex gentleman who met me after-
 wards upon Portsdown Hill, told me
 that I had never uttered truer words
 in my life.

Such was the man, my Lord, whose

opinions I have just quoted; and, will you put in competition with his opinions the loose verbiage of the CASTLE-REAGHS, the CANNINGS, the HUSKISSONS, the DAVIS GIDDYS, the BANKESSES, the WILBERFORCES, the ROSES, the ADDINGTONS, the JENKINSONS, the RYDERS, and the SCOTTS? What do these men know about the People of England, in comparison to the knowledge of the Noble Duke?

I think, then, my Lord, that this dread of the election of poor, illiterate, and worthless men you will now be convinced is wholly unfounded; that it is a supposition in hostility to nature as well as to experience. At the time when these American States were separated from the mother country, there were not wanting persons of high reputation as politicians in England to predict, in the most confident manner, that the equality, in point of political rights, would prevent the establishment of such a government as would be able to insure security to property; and as to the country's ever becoming a nation capable of going to war, it was treated as chimerical. What have we lived to see, however? Not only an efficient government for all domestic purposes; but a government capable of carrying on a victorious war against England single-handed; and, what is of infinitely greater importance, while numerous blockades of the Ports of this country existed, while its soil was invaded in many parts, while several of its towns were sacked, and while the seat of government itself was in the hands of a burning and destroying enemy, this government, built upon an equality of political rights, elective from the top to the bottom, feeling

that it was the people's government, and relying, therefore, upon the people's protection, *resorted to no suspension of the settled laws of the Land*. One would suppose, that, after this example, no man would be found to argue that to give the people of England back their right to choose one branch of the Legislature would be to *weaken the government*, and to *introduce confusion*.

I am far from denying the possibility, that, it might happen that the people would now and then choose unfit persons to represent them. And what then, my Lord? How could this alter the matter for the worse? Was WALSH fit to be a Member of Parliament? Was STEELE fit to be a Member of Parliament? Was JOSEPH HUNT fit to be a Member of Parliament? Was DUNDAS fit to be a Member of Parliament? Was MILLS fit to be a Member of Parliament, who, being in the King's Bench for debt, got himself elected, came out of prison upon his *privilege*, and immediately went abroad, escaped from his creditors, and then vacated his seat? Do you think, my Lord, that if Mr. CAWTHORNE were to be expelled by a Reformed Parliament, *upon the same charges* on which he was expelled; do you think that a Reformed Parliament, having *for such reasons* expelled him, the people would do *more* than put him in again, and stick him up boldly as a fit associate for your Lordship? Into what company, then, are you afraid that the people would put you? Do you think, my Lord, that the People would re-elect men openly charged with selling seats, and who should refuse to put in any an-

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swer to so serious a charge? And, as to men of *low origin*, does your Lordship imagine that Mr. PLACE, the taylor, of Charing Cross, would degrade your Lordship by his society, any more than you are now degraded by the society of MABERLY the army-taylor? Might not STRAHAN, the Printer, be exchanged for my Printer, Mr. HAY (who is a much more clever man) without any diminution of the dignity of Parliament? Would your Lordship think yourself dishonoured by sitting on the same bench with any man of property who was formerly a shoe-black, if you do not think yourself dishonoured in sitting by the side of CHRISTOPHER IDLE, lately an army Contractor, and formerly a common Porter along the Streets? I think it very probable that the people in London or Middlesex might amongst others, choose SIR RICHARD PHILLIPS, who is a bookseller; and, would it be a degradation to your Lordship to have him sit beside you instead of BUTTERWORTH, who is a bookseller also, but who wants all the talents, and all the abundant understanding of SIR RICHARD PHILLIPS? If INCLEDON, or any other man that can sing a good song and play well upon the Base Viol, were to supplant BLOOMFIELD, in what way, and in what degree, would the dignity of Parliament be affected? If Messrs. POWER and FINNERTY were to be seated where CROKER and CANNING now sit, why should your Lordship feel sore, especially as the change, with a great addition of public spirit, would bring a still greater addition of knowledge, eloquence and wit? If FAVEL, WAITHMAN and

THOMPSON were to supply the places of CURTIS, SHAW and ATKINS, would your Lordship think your company changed for the worse? Would you find anything in the origin of the former *more low* than in that of the latter? Should you think yourself degraded by the society of that honest and able man, Mr. ATHERTON, the attorney at Calne; and do you not think yourself degraded by the society of GRAHAM, the attorney of Lord Lonsdale, or that of HURST, the attorney of the Duke of Norfolk? And suppose that WM. DRAPER BEST was to give way to Mr. HOLT, should your Lordship blush in consequence of the change? If any other big mushrooms, who had not been the loan-agents to France, were to supply the place of the BARINGS, how would your Lordship be dishonoured? Would it grieve your Lordship to have the place of Mr. HUSKISSON supplied by any of the merchants' or bankers' clerks in the city? What difference would it be to gentlemen of ancient family whether SIR ROBERT PEELE kept his place, or whether that place were filled by some other weaver of calicoes? Nay, I am not aware of any cause of dread of dishonour if Mr. HUNT were to supply the place of HART DAVIS; and, I do not believe that the reputation of the Parliament could possibly suffer much, even if I and my sons, were, through any accidental caprice in the people, to be made to thrust out the *old greedy Purser* and his sons, from every thing but those places and sinecures, through which they have drawn more than *three hundred thousand pounds of principal public money*. In short, my Lord, do you

believe, that the people, if left to their own free choice, would put into Parliament *more* than a score of wrangling place hunting lawyers; more than two score low-bred greedy adventurers, returned fat from India; more than three score of Loan-Jobbers, Stock-Jobbers, and Converted Jews; more than a score of late Contractors, Army-Tailors, and Commissaries; more than two score of Insolvent Debtors, who would appeal to the People to give them a protection against their creditors; more than three score of wretches whose object would be a mere speculation in the sale of their votes; more than seven score, besides all the former, whom the people would put in at the command of others, without ever knowing them or seeing them, and who, when put in, would receive their instructions, from day to day, how they should vote, from some person whose interest it was to pillage the people? Does your Lordship think that the people, if left to themselves, would do **MORE** than this? Do you think that they would do any thing **WORSE** than this? If you do not, you will, I imagine, no longer entertain any apprehensions upon a subject, upon which, perhaps, I have too long detained your Lordship.

* * * The remainder of Mr. Cobbett's Letter to Lord Folkestone will appear next week.

TO
MR. CROSS,

One of the Counsel for the unfortunate State Prisoners, who were lately tried and convicted at Derby.

SIR,—It appears that you, while acting as Counsel for the unfortunate

State-prisoners at Derby, thought fit, in the course of your defence of BRANDRETH, to fall foul of Mr. COBBETT, and to ascribe the Insurrection to the influence of what you were pleased to call his “mischievous, malignant, and diabolical publications.” The following Extract from your Speech is taken from the Supplement to the *Times* of the 25th instant

“He need scarcely, speaking to those whom he now addressed, dwell upon the grinding distress, the extreme misery, and the severe want which many in these manufacturing districts endured in the course of the past year. We had just concluded a protracted and a glorious war of 25 years by a glorious peace. The country expected to enjoy the promised fruits of their long toils and their great exertions. It pleased Providence, however, to afflict us with an unfavourable season. The sanguine hopes of the people were disappointed, and misery and want came in place of anticipated prosperity and enjoyment. The fruits of peace were embittered, trade failed, and the labourer and manufacturer could neither find employment, or sufficient means of subsistence. Many industrious and honest men were in consequence exposed almost to absolute famine. Far was he from approving of the conduct of those demagogues who took advantage of these distresses to excite discontent against the constitution and establishments of the country; and told those who were suffering from unavoidable want, that all their misery proceeded from the corrup-

"tion of Government, and the pres-
 "sure of public burdens. Excited
 "by them, the people met in *tumul-*
 "*tuous* assemblies, and transmitted
 "petitions to both Houses of Parlia-
 "ment, as well as to the Sovereign,
 "for an *alteration in the laws* and
 "administration of the State. The
 "Legislature and the Sovereign
 "showed *every disposition* to grant
 "relief and to remedy distress, but
 "they could not keep pace with
 "the *impatient desires* and *extra-*
 "*vagant hopes* of the petitioners;
 "and the *foolish people*, not seeing
 "that it was impossible for the King
 "to create one bushel of wheat to
 "add to the produce of the *harvest*,
 "and that the Legislature could do
 "nothing but regulate the distribu-
 "tion of the supplies that existed,
 "attributed their wants and sufferings
 "to the Government. In this idea
 "they were encouraged by the
 "wickedness of artful and designing
 "men. While the people were *nearly*
 "*dying for want of food*, one of the
 "*most mischievous, malignant, and*
 "*diabolical publications that ever is-*
 "*sued from the press*, was addressed
 "to the most suffering class—the dis-
 "tressed journeymen and labourers
 "over the kingdom. This publica-
 "tion, together with others of the
 "kind, he was convinced had created
 "the *insurrection*. It spread with
 "astonishing rapidity, and in incredi-
 "ble numbers. It was dispersed in
 "thousands. It created a *ferment* in
 "every quarter of the country. All
 "this was done in the face of day,
 "and without any attempt to obstruct
 "the circulation. The *mischievous*
 "and *wicked author* boasted of his

"success in his *wholesale trade of se-*
 "*dition*. This address to the jour-
 "neymen was published about the
 "beginning of winter; and, *in a*
 "*fortnight afterwards*, an address
 "*followed to the weaver-boys*, of the
 "same tendency and in the same
 "style. The *wicked author* boasted
 "of the numbers he had sold,
 "and of his gainful speculation in
 "distributing *cheap sedition*. [The
 "learned counsel here read one
 "of the advertisements to Cobbett's
 "cheap Register, mentioning the man-
 "ner in which his publication might
 "be distributed over the country,
 "the profit which might be derived
 "from the sale of his weekly pamph-
 "lets, and the number which had al-
 "ready been sold.] Of No. 18, he
 "said in a N. B., not fewer than
 "44,000 copies had been disposed of.
 "Let the Attorney-General look at
 "this. What was the Attorney-Ge-
 "neral of that day doing? *Why was*
 "*not this wholesale and retail sedition*
 "*proceeded against?* The country
 "was inundated to such a degree with
 "this and similar publications, that
 "the magistrates were *confounded*,
 "and uncertain how to act. All
 "these works attributed the public
 "distress to *existing establishments*,
 "and directed the discontent of the
 "people to the Government under
 "which they *lived*, telling them, in
 "*other words*, that they might remove
 "it any time, or any day, or at any
 "hour they chose. A Circular had
 "been afterwards transmitted to the
 "magistrates from Lord Sidmouth,
 "expounding to them the law of libel,
 "and telling them that it was not ne-
 "cessary to wait till the Sessions to

“abate the nuisance, but that they
“might in the mean time hold the
“authors to bail, or imprisonment in
“case of their not finding bail, and
“thus prevent the infection of their
“principles. *In the doctrine and utility of this Circular he entirely concurred, and regretted that it had not
“sooner appeared.”*

Now, as some months must elapse, as you were well aware, before you receive that castigation from Mr. Cobbett to which you have so flagrantly exposed yourself; and as the ministerial newspapers have lost no time in following up your attack, and are urging the Attorney General to *prosecute me*, for the purpose of suppressing Mr. Cobbett's *present* writings, it is at least due to my employer and to myself, if to no others, to give an immediate **CONTRADICTION** to your imputations.

I assert, therefore, that you, when ascribing criminal motives to Mr. Cobbett, and evil effects to his writings, were under a *worse* influence than those writings can be proved to have had over the minds of their readers. And to prove my assertion, I do, in the first place, what you did not dare to do. I refer not merely to the fact of Mr. Cobbett having addressed a Letter to the Journeymen and Labourers, but to the *contents* of that Letter.

It is true that in that Letter (No. 18, of Vol. 31, of Cobbett's Political Register) Mr. Cobbett did *not* ascribe the “grinding distress, the extreme misery, and the severe want” to the hand of Providence in afflicting us with an “unfavourable season,” (by which you explain yourself to

mean an unproductive harvest,) because it is notorious that the distress, misery, and want had become almost intolerable before the “harvest-season” commenced: witness the memorable subscription-meeting at the London Tavern, in the month of July. But, he ascribed the evil to the “enormous amount of the taxes,” the fruits of that “protracted and glorious war” spoken of by you.

After assigning the taxes as the immediate cause of the distress, Mr. Cobbett proceeded, according to his usual practice, which does not appear to be your practice, to *prove* his position. Having proved it, and not before, he proceeded thus: “We next come to consider what have been the causes of this weight of taxes. Here we must go back a little in our history, and you will soon see, that this intolerable weight has all proceeded from the want of a Parliamentary Reform.” He then goes on, as before, to prove his assertion. He traces the taxes in great part to the war, and the war to the want of a Parliamentary Reform.

You, Sir, more than insinuated, that Mr. Cobbett's views were not limited to a Parliamentary Reform (such as was deemed necessary by the late Duke of Richmond, and many other eminent and honourable men), but that they extended to a total overthrow, by violent means, of every existing establishment. But, what does Mr. Cobbett himself say in that very Address which you characterize as “most mischievous, most malignant, and most diabolical?” He says, “I know of no enemy of reform and of the happiness of the country so

“great as that man, who would persuade you that we possess *nothing good*, and that all must be torn to pieces.” And again: “I have before observed to you, that when the friends of corruption in France saw that they could not prevent a *change* they bent their endeavours to produce *confusion*, in which they fully succeeded. *They employed numbers of unprincipled men to go about the country proposing all sorts of mad schemes.*” [There is a Rowland for your *Oliver*, Master Cross.] “They produced, first a confusion in men’s minds, and next a civil war between provinces, towns, villages, and families. The tyrant ROBESPIERRE, who was exceeded in cruelty only by some of the Bourbons, was proved to have been in league with the open enemies of France. He butchered all the real friends of freedom whom he could lay his hands on, except PAINE, whom he shut up in a dungeon, till he was reduced to a skeleton. This monster was at last put to death himself; and his horrid end ought to be a warning to any man, who may wish to walk in the same path. But, I am, for my part, in little fear of the influence of such men. They cannot cajole you, as Robespierre cajoled the people of Paris. It is, nevertheless, necessary for you to be on your guard against them, and when you hear a man talking big and hectoring about **PROJECTS WHICH GO FARTHER THAN A REAL AND RADICAL REFORM OF THE PARLIAMENT**, be you well assured, that that man would be a se-

cond Robespierre if he could, and that he would make use of you, and sacrifice the life of the very last man of you: that he would ride upon the shoulders of some, through rivers of the blood of others, for the purpose of gratifying his own selfish and base and insolent ambition.”

The question, then, is, in what way did Mr. COBBETT recommend the Journeymen and Labourers to act, in order to contribute to the obtainment of a real and radical Reform of the Parliament? We have seen that he earnestly warned them against the projects of those who proposed to “go further.” And we have seen that he cautioned them against listening to “unprincipled men” who might be “EMPLOYED to go about the country proposing all sorts of mad schemes.” In what way, then, did he advise them to act? His words are: “While, however, you are upon your guard against false friends, you should neglect no opportunity of doing all that is within your power to give support to the cause of Reform. PETITION is the channel for your sentiments, and there is no village so small that its petition would not have some weight. You ought to attend at every public meeting within your reach. You ought to read to, and to assist each other in coming at a competent knowledge of all public matters. Above all things you ought to be unanimous in your object, and not to suffer yourselves to be divided.” He then in the most convincing language pointed out the absurdity and the injustice of

the alarming and horrid practice of assailing Butchers, Bakers, and other dealers in the necessities of life. And thus he concludes, "I have no room, nor have I any desire to appeal to your passions upon this occasion. I have laid before you, with all the clearness I am master of, the causes of our misery, the measures which have led to those causes, and I have pointed out what appears to me to be the only remedy—namely, a *reform in the Commons', or People's House of Parliament*. I exhort you to proceed in a **PEACEABLE** and *lawful* manner, but at the same time, to proceed with zeal and resolution in the attainment of this object. If the Skulkers will not join you, if the "decent fireside" gentry still keep aloof, proceed by yourselves. Any man can draw up a *Petition*, and any man can carry it up to London, with instructions to deliver it into trusty hands, to be presented whenever the House shall meet."

A man must be predetermined to understand an Author to mean the reverse of what his words convey, who can imagine that Mr. Cobbett had any worse object in addressing the distressed Journeymen and Labourers, than that of inducing them to *concur in peaceably petitioning for a Reform in Parliament*, instead of "tumultuously" assembling for the purposes of injuring the persons, and destroying the property of their neighbours, and demolishing Shops and Machinery.

Such was the publication which you characterised as one of the most mis-

chievous, malignant, and diabolical that ever issued from the press! Such was the publication, which, together with others of the kind, you declared that you were *convinced had created the insurrection!* I shall ask you, by and bye, how you came to be so convinced.—This Address to the Journeymen and Labourers, was followed, you say, "a fortnight afterwards by an Address to the Weaver-Boys of the same tendency and the same style." I do not know exactly to what publication you refer. The "Address to the Weaver-Boys" was not published till the 25th of January last, a period of *twelve weeks* "afterwards"; which is somewhat long for a *fortnight*. If however you mean *that* publication, I will give you an extract from it; or, if you mean a former publication which appeared only a fortnight after No. 18, and was addressed not to the Weaver-Boys in particular, but "To the Readers of the Register" in general—I will give you an extract from that too: especially as you appear to be as ignorant of the one as of the other. In the last-mentioned Paper, which was No. 20, published November 16th, Mr. Cobbett says:—"There is one particular publication (Mr. Burke's 'Thoughts and Details on Scarcity,') which the Courier recommends to the Government to cause to be reprinted and widely circulated, the main object of which publication is, it would seem, to prevent you, my friends, the Journeymen and Labourers, from "*Cutting Rich Men's throats,*" and to convince you that the said cutting of throats would not fill your

“bellies or your purses. One may answer this pamphlet in advance. For, have you cut any rich men’s throats? Have you ever talked of doing it? Has any friend of freedom ever attempted to justify any such act? Has any one of the friends of freedom ever advised you to cut any body’s throat? No: and, therefore, the very idea thus put forth, is an insult to the nation.” And in the “Address to the Weaver Boys,” Mr. Cobbett says: “For the hundredth time, and, in the most distinct manner, we call upon the sons of corruption in London, who have all the means of information and of exposure in their hands, to point out the single instance, in which the Reformers have sought riot and confusion. In short, the charge is wholly false; and, it is a falsehood, not proceeding from a hasty thought, but from deliberate and settled malice.”—(Think of that Mr. Cross.) “It has been my unceasing endeavour to prevent breaches of the peace; to prevent mobbing, rioting, pulling down buildings, destroying machinery, and burning houses, stacks and mills; and, the people, whenever they have been permitted to assemble, have separated as peaceably as ever the Houses of Parliament or the Privy Council separated.”

When you were accusing Mr. Cobbett of having by means of these Publications, wilfully instigated your clients to the commission of that offence which was charged against them, as High Treason, why did you not produce some of the treasonable passages in support of your accusa-

tion? If the passages which I have above cited were not calculated for your purpose, why did you not search for others that were? If you did search, and found none, must you not have known that your accusation was false? Must you not have known that you were falsely accusing, in a Court of Justice, an absent individual, of having designedly instigated the Prisoners at the Bar to the commission of a crime, for which they were on trial for their lives, as High Treason? What say you to these questions, Sir?

Instead of citing one passage, line, or word, from any of these publications in support of this most serious accusation; an accusation, which considering all the circumstances under which it was preferred, was, if false, as infamous and diabolical as the devil himself could devise; we are told that you thought it sufficient to read one of Mr. Cobbett’s *Advertisements*, mentioning the manner in which his publications, might be distributed over the country, the profit which might be derived from the sale of his weekly pamphlets, and the number which had already been sold! And it is curious, as well as important to observe, that the advertisement which you so read, appears to have been that which was prefixed to No. 22, the celebrated “*Letter to the Luddites* :” a publication, which I will venture to say has PREVENTED more riot, more outrage, more devastation, and more bloodshed, in the manufacturing parts of the kingdom, than has actually been committed in the whole kingdom, since the circulation of these cheap publications commenced.

It is stated that you represented Mr. Cobbett to have boasted in a N. B. to the above *Advertisement*, that, "of No. 18, *forty-four thousand* copies had been disposed of." Mr. Cobbett added, "*Let Corruption rub that out if she can!*" It does not appear that you repeated this exclamation; but you are stated to have immediately exclaimed, "Let the Attorney-General look at this! What was the Attorney-General of that day doing? Why was not this wholesale and retail sedition proceeded against?" For shame, Mr. Cross! Why blame the Attorney-General? The good man was not idle. He did "look at this"—"this wholesale and retail sedition;" and could make nothing of it. It was so provokingly inoffensive that Lord Sidmouth was *sorry to say* that the Law Officers of the Crown could find nothing in it that they could prosecute with any chance of success. Was it not strange, think you, that a Publication so *rankly seditious*, that the very *smell* of it (for you do not appear to have read it) convinced You that it created the *Insurrection* in Derbyshire, should at the same time be so *perfectly legal*, that even the Law Officers of the Crown could not discover it to be otherwise?

If it was not the bare sight or smell of these Publications that convinced you that they created the *Insurrection*, let me come to my question, and ask you, *by what was you so convinced?* Not by the *language* of those publications, I am sure. Not by any *Evidence* at the Trial, for none of those publications were mentioned, or at all alluded to, by any of the Witnesses. It was not even proved that Jeremiah Brandreth or any of his associates had ever read, or heard

read, any one of those publications. You were pleased to tell the Court that No. 18, (the first of the *cheap Registers*) created a *ferment* in every quarter of the country. Granted; and a very wholesome ferment too. But when did it begin? Must it not have begun soon after the publication was first issued, which was on the 2d of November? And yet this insurrection did not take place till the 9th of June! It must have been fermenting unconscionably long before it broke out. And be it remembered that Mr. Cobbett's *LAST* Publication previous to his quitting England had been published *more than two months* at the time of this "*Insurrection!*" His "*Leave-Taking Address*" was published by me on the 5th of April, and his first *Communication* from America on the 12th of July. What was it then that convinced you that his writings created the *Insurrection* of the 9th of June? It is clear that for *more than five months*, while Mr. Cobbett continued to publish, Jeremiah Brandreth did not rebel, but *two months afterwards*, it seems, he did. It was not till the "*Cheap-SE-DITION*" system had been superseded by the *dear SPY-system* that this insurrection broke out. And Mr. DENMAN, the other Counsel for the Prisoners, was inclined to attribute it to the latter system rather than to the former. I have not room to contrast his sentiments with yours in my present letter, but I shall resume the subject next week, and again return to the question, **BY WHAT WERE YOU CONVINCED?**

I am, Sir,

Your Obedient Servant,

WM. JACKSON.

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